The Dallas Morning News

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DALLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS

Bus agency under fire for on-time rate

Embattled organization facing more accusations, while vote on fate continues

By CORBETT SMITH
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Just as early voting has begun on a referendum on its very existence, Dallas County Schools is locked in a battle with its biggest customer, Dallas ISD, on whether it gets enough kids to school on time.

The embattled agency, which operates most public school buses in Dallas County, is facing thousands of dollars in fines if it can't convince DISD that its on-time arrival rates are accurate. DISD officials say those numbers are bunk because they exclude almost a third of their routes.

It's yet another stumble for DCS, coming less than two weeks from an election that will decide its fate.

And to make matters worse for the bus operator, it's not the only bit of bad news coming out. A video obtained by *The Dallas Morning News* shows DISD students illegally packed into the aisle of a DCS bus

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Nathan Hunsinger/Staff Photographer

Students exited a bus at Greiner Exploratory Arts Academy, a middle school magnet in Oak Cliff, on Wednesday.

GAME 7: **COWBOYS 33, REDSKINS 19**

Basking in victory

IN SPORTSDAY: DeMarcus Lawrence and the sack masters are a big reason the team has won two in a row. **1C**

Ashley Landis/Staff Photographer

Cowboys defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence glowed in the light reflected off raindrops as he left FedEx Field on Sunday after Dallas downed Washington, 33-19. A steady rain made for a sloppy game between the longtime rivals with the Cowboys defense ringing up four sacks, including one by Lawrence, and causing three turnovers. The Cowboys improved to 4-3 to take over second place in the NFC East.

Also: The team may learn this week if Ezekiel Elliott can finish the season or will begin serving his suspension right away. **1C**

MILITARY

Congressman grieves with families of fallen

Thousands of condolence letters are his penance after voting for Iraq war, he says

FROM WIRE REPORTS

RALEIGH, N.C. — On a Sunday morning more than two weeks after four U.S. soldiers were ambushed and killed in Niger, Rep. Walter Jones sat at the desk in his North Carolina office, doing what he's done more than 11,000 times in 14 years: signing letters to families of the dead troops.

"My heart aches as I write this letter for I realize you are suffering a great loss," the letter begins.

It's a form letter, but the Republican congressman signs each one personally — penance, he says, for voting yes for the Iraq war in 2002.

"For me, it's a sacred responsibility that I have to communicate my condolences to a family," Jones said in a telephone interview. "And it's very special to me because it goes back to my regretting that I voted to go into the Iraq war."

While President Donald Trump and his staff feuded publicly this month with a congresswoman and the pregnant widow of a soldier killed Oct. 4 in Niger, Jones was quietly continuing his letter writing.

He gets permission from a military liaison who makes sure that family members want condolences from a congressman they have likely never heard of. Then, from a desk drawer in his office in Greenville, he retrieves the same black ink fountain pen that he's used since he began this ritual years ago. In some cases, he sends letters to multiple relatives of a single soldier.

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PRESIDENCY

Trump assails Russia probe

Outburst follows report that first grand jury indictments could be announced today

FROM WIRE REPORTS

Tensions between Republicans and Democrats over the investigation of Russian involvement in the 2016 presidential election intensified Sunday, with President Donald Trump demanding to know why his campaign is under federal scrutiny while his former opponent Hillary Clinton is not.

ROBERT MUELLER

The president's latest outburst over the inquiry led by special counsel Robert Mueller surfaced on Twitter as his administration braced for the possibility that the first batch of charges in the case could be publicly announced as soon as Monday. CNN reported that a federal grand jury had approved an indictment, although details of the possible charges and the name of a defendant remained unclear.

Trump issued four tweets over 24

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LEGISLATURE

Straus exit soups up primary

Expect a battle for the state GOP's soul and policies, political observers say

By ROBERT T. GARRETT
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AUSTIN — Speaker Joe Straus' decision to give up one of state government's most powerful posts adds to the intensity of what already was shaping up as fierce combat in Texas House primaries in March.

JOE STRAUS

Straus' exit has demoralized business and trade association executives who prize predictability and liked his governing style, according to several close observers of the Legislature.

It's opened up the possibility of a far more conservative House, especially as center-right Republicans face an even greater challenge. Next

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METRO & STATE

Toll lanes planned for LBJ East
The Regional Transportation Council plans to expand 10.8 miles of Interstate 635 from Central Expressway to Interstate 30, using toll lanes to fund half of the $1.8 billion project. But the toll lanes still need the Legislature's approval. **1B**

Tiny home park gets green light
The Lake Dallas City Council approved a zoning change that would make a tiny home park in the downtown district possible. **1B**

Also: Quest to find marker's meaning leads to piece of UTA history. **1B**

NATION

Puerto Rico utility pulls plug on contract
The Puerto Rico electric power company canceled a controversial $300 million contract it had signed with a small Montana-based company. **4A**

2 SEALs under investigation in death
Navy criminal authorities are investigating whether two members of the Navy's elite SEAL Team 6 strangled to death an Army Green Beret in Mali in June. **5A**

Also: Republicans will pitch their tax bill this week as a gift to the middle class, but Democrats will call it a Trojan horse. **4A**

BUSINESS

Luminant's actions speed coal's decline
The slow decline of coal has started to speed up with the recent announcements by Luminant that it was closing three coal-fired plants.
Economic Snapshot, 1D

SPORTSDAY

Is shake-up possible for reeling Mavs?
Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle has to walk a dangerous tightrope between making sure his players understand that things aren't as bad as they might look and blowing things up, Eddie Sefko writes. **1C**

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Mostly sunny

H 75
L 50

Metro, back page

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